

Message Text

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FOR CARTER FROM PA

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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT ANDREW H. MALCOLM DESPATCH NEW YORK TIMES WEDNESDAY AUGUST 3 HEADED "SEOUL IS PRESSING IMPRISONED DISSIDENTS TO 'REPENT'."
2. POLICEMEN AND OTHER AGENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG HEE HAVE BEGUN APPLYING INTENSE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL PRESSURES TO IMPRISONED DISSIDENTS IN RECENT DAYS TO GET THEM TO SIGN STATEMENTS OF REPENTANCE FOR THEIR OPPOSITION AND POLITICAL "CRIMES."
3. FOURTEEN MEN, A SMALL FRACTION OF THE 260 OR MORE POLITICAL PRISONERS SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE SPARTAN JAIL SYSTEM, HAVE ALREADY BEEN RELEASED. OFFICIALLY, THE UNCLASSIFIED

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GOVERNMENT HAS NO COMMENT, BUT RUMORS, FED BY OFFICIAL INNUENDOES AND HINTS TO FAMILIES, ARE RIFE THAT MANY OTHERS WILL BE LET OUT SOON, POSSIBLY AROUND AUG. 15, THE ANNIVERSARY OF KOREA'S LIBERATION IN 1945 FROM JAPANESE COLONIAL RULE.

4. PRISONERS HAVE COME UNDER EXTREME PRESSURE TO SIGN

STATEMENTS OF "REPENTANCE." THE CONTENTS OF THE STATEMENTS VARY BUT THEY GENERALLY INCLUDE AN ADMISSION OR WRONGDOING, SUCH AS HAVING CRITICIZED PRESIDENT PARK, AN EXPRESSION OF REGRET, A PROMISE NOT TO REPEAT THE CRIME AND TO LEAD A "QUIET LIFE" AND A RECOGNITION THAT THE SUSPENDED PRISON SENTENCE COULD BE REIMPOSED.

5. MANY PRISONERS HAVE BEEN SUMMONED TO INTERROGATION ROOMS OR VISITED IN THEIR CELLS AND URGED AND CAJOLED, AS WELL AS THREATENED, TO SIGN. RELATIVES' VISITING HOURS WERE LENGTHENED IF THEY WOULD URGE THE PRISONERS TO SIGN. PRISONERS WERE TOLD THAT THE RELEASE OF OTHERS HINGED ON THEIR OWN SIGNATURE. ONE PRISONER WAS SHOWN A DEATHBED LETTER FROM HIS FATHER URGING HIM TO SIGN.

6. THOSE WHO REFUSED OUTRIGHT WERE PLACED IN "PUNISHMENT ROOMS"--WINDOWLESS ENCLOSURES MEASURING LITTLE MORE THAN ONE YARD BY TWO YARDS, WHERE THE SUMMER'S HEAT AND HUMIDITY ARE HEAVY. THE PRISONERS WERE TOLD THAT THEIR RELEASE NOW DEPENDED SOLELY ON THEMSELVES.

7. BUT PRISON AUTHORITIES SHOWED THEMSELVES OPEN FOR BARGAINING OVER SOME PHRASING, AT ONE POINT EVEN ALLOWING A WOMAN TO SIGN FOR HER IMPRISONED BROTHER WHO REMAINED ADAMANT. "THEY WERE PRACTICALLY BEGGING US TO SIGN," SAID ONE MAN. "THEY SAID THEY HAD THEIR ORDERS."
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8. THE RELEASE OF THE 14 MEN, ONLY TWO OF WHOM WERE CONSIDERED IMPORTANT FIGURES AMONG THE DISSIDENTS, IS SEEN AS A MEASURE OF THE SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT'S EAGERNESS TO IMPROVE ITS IMAGE IN WASHINGTON, ESPECIALLY ON CAPITOL HILL. THE REPUTATION THERE OF PRESIDENT PARK'S AUTHORITARIAN REGIME AND THE CONTINUING INVESTIGATION OF THE KOREAN BRIBERY SCANDAL CAN JEOPARDIZE THE HUGE MILITARY AID PACKAGES PLANNED AS UNITED STATES TROOPS WITHDRAW FROM THIS COUNTRY.

9. THE ACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT MAY ALSO BE A MEASURE OF SOME INCREASED EFFECTIVENESS OF AMERICAN PRESSURES ON MR. PARK TO ALLEVIATE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SOUTH KOREA, WHICH HE HAS RULED WITH INCREASING FORCE SINCE HE CAME TO POWER AFTER A MILITARY COUP IN 1961. FOR YEARS UNITED STATES OFFICIALS, HERE AND IN WASHINGTON, HAVE EXPRESSED "CONCERN" OVER THE WIDE-RANGING ARRESTS, TRIALS AND HARSH PRISON SENTENCES AND HAVE SAID THEY WERE WORKING QUIETLY BEHIND THE SCENES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, LITTLE APPARENT EFFECT, ACCORDING TO SCORES OF DISSIDENTS INTERVIEWED IN RECENT MONTHS.

10. BUT THE COMBINATION OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATED INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AND HIS DETERMINATION TO WITHDRAW MOST OF THE 33,000 AMERICAN GROUND TROOPS HERE MAY BE PRODUCING AT LEAST SOME COSMETIC IMPROVEMENTS, SOME OF WHICH, IRONICALLY, ARE BEING OPPOSED BY DISSIDENTS.

11. STUDENTS, CHRISTIAN MINISTERS, LABORERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS ARE STILL BEING ARRESTED AND INTERROGATED. GOVERNMENT AGENTS STILL FOLLOW MANY CITIZENS, AND RECENTLY FORBODE THE SINGING OF "GOD SAVE THE PEOPLE" IN A COLLEGE PRODUCTION OF "GODSPELL." THE NEWSPAPERS ARE STILL CONTROLLED AS CLOSELY AS EVER BY MEMBERS OF THE KOREAN CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY WHO ISSUE "GUIDANCE" TO EDITORS
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IN FREQUENT TELEPHONE CALLS.

12. BUT EARLY IN JULY THE RUBBER-STAMP NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY PRESIDENT PARK, ADOPTED A RESOLUTION THAT URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW ALL SOUTH KOREANS, EVEN THOSE WHO HAD VIOLATED MR. PARK'S SEVERE EMERGENCY DECREES, TO WORK FOR NATIONAL UNITY AND HAVE A NORMAL LIFE.

13. ON JULY 10, UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE PHILIP C. HABIB, A FORMER AMBASSADOR TO KOREA, VISITED HERE. HE ANNOUNCED PURPOSE WAS FOR FURTHER CONSULTATIONS ON THE GRADUAL TROOP WITHDRAWAL, A SUBJECT ALREADY SCHEDULED FOR THOROUGH DISCUSSIONS IN SEOUL AT THE END OF THE MONTH BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HAROLD BROWN.

14. ONE WEEK AFTER MR. HABIB'S VISIT, THE 14 MEN WERE RELEASED. UNITED STATES EMBASSY OFFICIALS DECLINED COMMENT ON ANY CONNECTION. A SPOKESMAN SAID: "THE EMBASSY REFLECTS THE PRESIDENT'S POLICIES AND THE PRESIDENT HAS REFLECTED AN INCREASED INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS."

15. THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE PROVIDED A MODEST INCREASE IN MORALE FOR THE SOUTH KOREAN OPPOSITION MOVEMENT AND GIVEN IT A SENSE OF BARGAINING POWER. IN FACT, SOME PRISONERS HAVE REPORTEDLY VOWED NOT TO SIGN ANY STATEMENT SO AS TO MAINTAIN A POLITICAL PRISONER POPULATION INTERNATIONALLY EMBARRASSING TO PRESIDENT PARK.

16. "WE THINK THESE PARTIAL RELEASES ARE A PUBLIC RELATIONS FACE-SAVING GIMMICK AND AN EFFORT TO DIVIDE US," SAID ONE DISSIDENT LEADER, WHO RISKS A SEVEN-YEAR PRISON TERM FOR CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT TO A FOREIGNER.
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17. "EVEN WHEN YOU'RE OUT OF JAIL, YOU'RE STILL A
PRISONER BECAUSE YOU CAN'T SAY ANYTHING POLITICAL OR
THEY'LL THROW YOU RIGHT BACK IN," HE SAID. CHRISTOPHER

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